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CONCLUSION

IT will have been observed that the Chinese of Southeast Asia are, in essence, the same people over the entire area, in spite of a considerable diversity in occupation and dialect, and variation in purity of blood. There is a concentration of Yunnanese in the Shan States, but this tribe does not occur in any numbers elsewhere, and the other tribes are unequally distributed. For example, the Hokkiens and persons of mixed race of Hokkien origin form the majority community in Malaya and Indonesia, being outnumbered by the Cantonese, however, in the Malay States. In Siam the Teochius and the Hakkas are more numerous than the Hokkiens, and Hailams are also a large community. In the Philippines three-quarters of the Chinese are Hokkiens, and most of the remainder Cantonese. In Indochina the Hokkiens, though numerically seeming to yield first place to the Cantonese, are the principal Chinese merchants: indeed they were the pioneering tribe in the Nanyang and they are still, on the whole, the wealthiest.

So much may be said to illustrate the diversity of the tribal distribution of these Chinese who, but for a few exceptions (such as a tiny freak pocket of Shantung people in North Borneo) originate from the southeast corner of China—a small bit of Marco Polo's 'Mangi'. Diversity of occupation again is very pronounced among these emigrants. Hailams, for instance, tend to be pig and poultry rearers, small cultivators, and domestic servants; in Borneo the Hakkas are the most numerous community and here they are largely agriculturists. Cantonese and Hakkas supply most of the Chinese labour for tin-mines and rubber estates. Nor should we accept the naïve statement that 'all Chinese are alike' (which is but an extension of the unobservant conclusion of the European tenderfoot that 'all Chinese *look* alike'). There is a notable psychological difference between, say, the volatile, nimble-witted Cantonese and the more phlegmatic Hokkien or Teochiu; the Hailams have usually quite distinct physical characteristics from other Chinese, being more delicately made and exhibiting marked cranial differences from their brethren from the mainland. As for the Hakkas, they are in some ways a people apart, of northern origin and later immigrants than the other tribes and deriving from islands of population surrounded by Cantonese or Hokkiens in

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their native country; moreover they have a stubbornness of disposition which distinguishes them from their fellow Chinese. (It is worthy of note that the most numerous among the early Communists in the Nanyang were the Hailams and Hakkas.)[1]

Sun Yat-sen said: 'The Chinese people are of the Han or Chinese race with common blood, common language, common religion, and common customs—a single race.' As regards 'blood' in any scientific sense this is manifestly untrue; on the contrary,

> The modern Chinese people is an amalgamation of many elements originally different from one another. . . . In colour; in stature, above all in cephalic indices, about 42 per cent are mesocephalic and about 43 per cent are brachycephalic, and about 15 per cent dolichocephalic. Even these classes are distinctly subdivided into dolicho-leptorrhinic and dolicho-platyrrhinic. There is also a low-headed type, and, in the South, a trace of a dwarf element. . . . Prehistory points to a race already mixed in the basin of the Yellow River. . . .[2]

In spite, however, of a number of modifications and reservations, the remainder of the statement of the Father of the Revolution, especially regarding religion and customs, could be convincingly maintained. Allowing for the numerous variations which have been suggested above, the Chinese of Southeast Asia, drawn mostly from Fukien and Kwangtung, are quite remarkably homogeneous. Not only have they marked physical characteristics in common; their customs, their religion, their attitude of mind have an almost uncanny similarity. What Clement Williams remarked of their shops in Bhamo on the Yunnan-Burma frontier nearly ninety years ago—'the likeness of one Burmese to another is striking, but the absolute sameness of one Chinese shop to another is truly wonderful'—is equally true of the 'sameness' of Chinese temples, houses, ornaments, customs, methods of mining and agriculture, and handicrafts all over the Southeast Asian area, from the city of Cholon to a remote *tienda* in Mindanao, or from the tin-fields of Larut to the pepper plantations of Cambodia. Nor is this merely a superficial impression (such as 'all Chinese look alike'); it derives from their common steeping in Chinese culture, even though the latter's springs of inspiration have ceased to well up from the depths and it has been for long (as Professor Toynbee says) in a state of petrification.

[1] See p. 370 regarding the Japanese identification of Hailams with Communism.

[2] *China Year Book* 1932.

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were almost entirely uninterested in them except as traders, labourers, or agents for dealing with the native peoples. In the last capacity the Chinese were very useful, for they had a knowledge of native ways which the Europeans lacked and in any case had no leisure to gain, being occupied so much of their time in warfare among themselves. The Chinese, in their turn, were interested in these white barbarians only to the extent that it was expedient to know their peculiarities. They showed themselves, however, much more adaptable to learning about the white race than the Europeans did to learning about them, for, generally speaking, the Spanish, the Dutch, the British, and the French were almost completely ignorant of the Chinese language and *mores*, and the Chinese were happy that it should be so. Another reason for the failure of Europeans to acquire any real knowledge of the people among whom they lived was that for the European life in the tropics—at any rate from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century—was short, and he either returned home with a competence within a few years or else perished. Thus it was found convenient by the Company and early colonial Governments to leave the conduct of their community affairs to the Chinese headmen, except in the more serious cases, and this gave the Chinese much liberty of action. Unfortunately the fears of the tiny minority such as were the Europeans, especially in face of the increasing numbers of the Chinese, put them in a very anxious and suspicious frame of mind. The Chinese ethos, usually so serene, was subject to occasional social squalls or typhoons when the community was seized with mass hysteria. This was really only a means of dispersal of an accumulation of real or imaginary grievances and the trouble subsided, if handled with reason and tolerant firmness, almost as quickly as it had arisen. But in the minds of the Europeans with their tiny garrisons the outbreaks were often interpreted as signs of rebellion. Indeed in some cases they were rightly so interpreted, and there can be no doubt that when fear and distrust had dried up relationship into a tinder a spark would fire it into a rebellion, as was the case in Manila on St Francis's Eve 1603, when things had gone so far that it was either the Chinese or the Spanish who had to be destroyed. It is equally certain that a greater degree of understanding on either side would have averted this and later disasters.

Whilst thus simplifying the situation, it must be conceded that

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Whilst thus simplifying the situation, it must be conceded that the Chinese social organization overseas early revealed serious deficiencies. It was not a complete unit of China transplanted, but fragments from various settings placed together in one spot. Different tribes and classes were put into unwonted juxtaposition, and the criminal and unruly element was disproportionately strong (this last fact needs emphasis). Embryo communal or municipal systems were often taken charge of by the deadly Triad society which used them for its own purposes. At the same time, too rigid a distinction has been drawn between the 'benevolent' *kongsis* and the 'malevolent' *huis*, or secret societies: it seems that the two were not separated in this categorical fashion and in fact were sometimes distinct associations with benevolent functions and Triad societies at one and the same time.[1] The shortcomings of the system became very manifest at certain times, as in Java when Chinese secret societies plotted to seize power from the Dutch, and in the Straits Settlements when these societies under the Triad societies got much out of hand and caused riots and practised intimidation for many years, later extending their activities to Perak where they added to the existing disorder until it approached anarchy.

This, however, is a special aspect of Chinese society in the Nanyang and is by no means typical. By and large, the Chinese were very law-abiding and gave the ruling Powers little trouble. Schlegel was right when he said that the Chinese were 'easy to govern'. Indeed this quality has brought them, at times, into the contempt of rough European individualists who have dismissed this tractableness as the characteristic of 'sheep'.

Students of the Chinese language who have ploughed through the *Tsŭ Erh Chih*, Sir Francis Wade's Documentary Series, will remember a number of memorials in which prefects or intendants

[1] The writer, after extensive experience of secret societies and district and clan organization, is sceptical of many of the theories advanced by observers. Schlegel (as we have seen in the chapters on the Kongsis of Borneo) has definitely regarded the Kongsis as a transplanting of municipal organization necessary to the functioning of Chinese society. Yet they were certainly 'secret societies' under Triad or Heaven and Earth League control. Only when countries, such as Malaya, began to legislate to control these societies was a distinction made between 'good' and 'bad' societies: the former were granted registration; the latter, if they functioned without registration, were illegal and, of course, definitely 'secret societies'. The writer is of opinion that a great deal more research into the matter is called for. (W. L. Blythe, 'The Interplay of Chinese Secret and Political Societies in Malaya', in *Eastern World*, March and April 1950, adds considerably to our knowledge.)

7: Janlekha X-4,5 (1948-1953) 1956 AO7 Central Thai
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433 affected by these few importing countries' determination
648 to be self-sufficient in food.

• 181 A dual economy as a distinctive character of colonial
433 rule is a theory propounded by some Dutch economists who contend that in tropical dependencies there are two distinct systems of economy. In the Western sector economic forces act in strict accordance with the economic laws enunciated by the earlier classical economists; but in the Eastern sector these laws have no force, and Western economic principles are inapplicable. The Western sector is ultra-capitalist since economic forces act freely, not even subject to the social inhibitions which still restrain them in Europe or the Western world; the Eastern sector, on the other hand, is precapitalist, with prestige carrying more weight than profit and communal influence restraining the individual desire of gain.[17] One
433 of the consequences of a dual economy is that it is difficult
438 to conduct business because the people will not trade on
439 Western lines. Inefficiency in trade leads to high operational cost and thus to social waste. Moreover, there is a likelihood of exploitation of indigenous people by Western traders as well as by foreigners of Asian origin who are free from social restraint.
648

563 One feature that has long been common to the countries of Southeast Asia and is so obvious that it could not fail

17. J. S. Furnivall, "Cooperation, Competition, and Isolation," Southeast Asia in the World Today, ed. Phillips Talbot, op. cit., p. 71.

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Suez Canal in 1869, and the consolidation of 361
Western control, direct or indirect, over 369
most of Southeast Asia in the 1890's, fol- 175
lowed by American acquisition of the Philip- 178
pines at the turn of the century.

More important, the great cities were, 177
and to a large degree still are, foreign crea- 361
tions, essentially alien to the Southeast 369
Asian landscape. Although several began as 178
native settlements, they developed as for-
eign exclaves on the margins of Asia, in
much the same way as did the plantation
system and mining operations. With the ex-
ception of Bangkok, they represented and
functioned as the overseas appendages of
Western, not indigenous, interests, being
what Spate has called "head-links"—the
gates by which Western concepts entered to
destroy and build and in which a new system
of economic organization evolved.[12] Indeed, [184]
the concept of the Asian plural society was
inspired by the contrast between the basical-
ly foreign great city and the indigenous agri-
cultural village. The ties of the great city
with its hinterland were primarily commer-
cial and associated with foreign-controlled
mining and plantation interests and with
Chinese-dominated rice trade. Such direct
political-administrative ties as did exist were
restricted primarily to indigenous elites,
small in number, which allied themselves
with Western interests. Where the indige-
nous rural populations were affected by
these urban-rural relations, it was primarily
through the plantation or the mining sys-
tem, both of which needed a large labor
force, or through Indian or Chinese inter-
mediaries.

On the other hand, the relations between 361
an indigenous capital, like Bangkok in its 369
earlier period, or Kyoto or Peking, and the 184
agrarian society upon which it was based 181 ●
were of quite a different order. In these
cases the capital represented the culmina-
tion of what might be termed a national
ethos, the epitome of what Redfield has

[12] O. H. K. Spate, "Factors in the Development [113]
of Capital Cities," *Geographical Review*, October,
1942, p. 628.

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called the "Great Tradition" in an agrarian society.[13] 361

The links between country and city in this basically feudal relationship were clear, consecutive, and relatively simple to define. To be sure, the villager would regard the capital as a different world from his own, but it was nevertheless a largely comprehensible world, if associated with abstractions and refinements beyond his immediate ken.[14] 369 184 181 ●

The modern great city of Southeast Asia, however, not only was different but was also incomprehensible to the child of the folk society, who came to regard it not merely as strange and foreign but also as hostile. The "foreignness" is reflected in their ethnic composition. Until the second World War at least the largest population group in Rangoon was Indian; Singapore is primarily a Chinese city; Bangkok is very largely Chinese, as is Saigon if Cholon, its twin city, is included; both Manila and Jakarta have large foreign and Chinese elements. To this extent the great city is more metropolitan than national. Each has its Chinese, European, and native quarters, for example, although in many instances the lines of division have become blurred, especially since the close of the war.[15] Furthermore, wherever Chinese populations are large, a predominant type of house is the so-called "shophouse," a two-or-more-story building with shops on the first floor, built to a standard width originally dictated by the length of the average fir-log lintel as used in South China, and with residential flats and 631 361 369 184 578 162 563 342 341 563 369 184

[13] See Robert Redfield and Milton Singer, "A Cultural Role of Cities," a working paper for the Conference on the Role of Cities in Economic Growth and Cultural Change, University of Chicago, May 24–26, 1954. [113]

[14] Cf. J. M. van der Kroef, "The Indonesian City: Its Culture and Evolution," *Asia*, March, 1953.

[15] In Singapore the Chinese are localised according to the various so-called "clans," e.g., Hokkien, Cantonese, Tiuchiu, Hailams, and Hakka (see B. W. Hodder, "Racial Groupings in Singapore," *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography*, October, 1953).

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[438] One reason for this is economic advantage. The coming of rubber, in particular, has given to the Malay peasant of the west coast an income considerably higher, on the whole, than that of the east coast peasant.

The effects of Westernization are profound. But they do not lie in crude physical displacement of the peasant or degradation of his living conditions. They lie in the widening of the gap between his expanding range of wants and his level of productivity, and in his inability to measure and in any way control the economic forces operating in his field. Westernization has meant for the peasant an enlargement of the social horizon—more knowledge, through better communications and education, of other places, of other peoples of kindred and dissimilar interests. It has created new ambitions: for different clothing, for new uses of leisure, for a better status for his children, for a position of power in the political scene. All this has disturbed the traditional patterns of peasant society. These patterns, and the class structure of South East Asian society of which they were a part, were probably never too satisfactory to the peasant. Anxiety and evasion must have often been the response to either too rigid or too elastic a rule—and the peasant seems often to have suffered from the exactions of his superior in the social scale. But the scope of the system was known, if not its precise implications. Nowadays the scope of the system has for the most part passed beyond the peasant's grasp, and much of it has become de-personalized.

To illustrate this by giving a more concrete analysis of some of the values in the peasant's life, let me take the area of Malaya and Indonesia where Islam is the major religion of the people.

In his daily life the Indonesian or Malay peasant is governed largely by the canons of behaviour, the ties of friendship and neighbourliness, the relations of work and social intercourse of his village community. So much is this so that in Java the *desa*, the village, was crystallized by the Dutch into an administrative and developmental unit, and its communal structure strengthened for welfare purposes. But as important as the village, and indeed often basic to its structure, are the family and larger kin organizations. From these a person gets his social status and much of his land and other property, and they have the primary role in his marriage and other crucial events in his progress through life.

Such domestic and local relationships also provide a framework for the peasant in his attempts to come to terms with the forces of nature and human destiny. His world of spirits is a local world. In Indonesia the ancestors do not play the predominant role which they do, for instance, in Annam. But the village, the seashore, the surrounding jungle, wells, trees, and stones are the home of many kinds of spirits, which afflict man with sickness or misfortune, or stand by him as his familiars to guard him. Basic in the religion of the Indonesian peasant is this local, essentially parochial, spirit element. All these values guide his economic and social conduct, and mean a great deal to him.

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But the situation is complex, even in village life. The system of rules governing domestic and local relations—marriage, adoption, inheritance, rights over land, succession to local office, rules of etiquette, and behaviour to superiors—is generally known as the *adat*, the custom. The nature of this custom, and what should be its relation to a more fully developed legal system, have been elaborately studied by the Dutch in Indonesia. At times indeed they have seemed to give the *adat* almost a mystical connotation. Alongside this body of custom, which of course varies from one peasant area to another, is the *shari'a*, the religious rule of Islam. On the one hand this is a unifying force, extra-village and extra-national in character, linking even the remotest mountain farmer spiritually or emotionally with the farmer or townsman of other Muslim communities in South East Asia, and far beyond. On the other hand, the Muslim religious law blends into the field of the *adat*, laying down rules about marriage, inheritance, and other family matters. Then there are the Western rules of law and administrative procedure, laying down just how land is to be acquired, held, and transferred, giving regulations for village management, and imposing penalties for certain kinds of breach of good relations. Yet the Western system offers also inducement to use the law, to protect one's interests firmly, to take advantage of situations where the *adat* has left rights undefined. So three factors—the custom, the Muslim religious rule, and the Western system of law—interact even in the heart of peasant society.

The result is a complex set of forces in dynamic operation, with the peasant being pressed by one or other of them or championing one or other as circumstances arise. In Negri Sembilan, for instance, there has come to be what is almost now a classic case of this interaction. In former times the valuable lands were for the most part those on which 'wet rice' could be cultivated. By the matrilineal system ancestrally operative in that area, these lands were handed down in the female line, from mother to daughter, or from aunt to niece. They were also cultivated largely by women. As rubber came to be developed, however, other lands on the hill-sides, previously of much less value, came to have worth too. For the most part these had to be cleared before being planted in rubber, and this clearing was a task that only men could do properly. Hence men came to have a more direct interest in this land. When questions of inheritance began to arise, divergent views became manifest. Some argued for treating new lands like the old, and handing them down in the female line like the rice lands. Yet there was a strong case for not including these rubber lands in the category of ancestral land, but for letting them be transmitted from a father to his children and through the male line in general. This principle of male inheritance is in line with the emphasis of the Muslim law. This not only gives guidance of the patrilineal kind for distribution of the property of the deceased in cases of dispute, but in all its provisions tends to stress the status of the male against that of the female.

Within the peasant society itself the potential clash of the two systems,

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181 local custom and religious rule, had been present for centuries. But there
177 was little in the economic situation to sharpen it, and the Muslim leaders
565 themselves were often so steeped in the local ways that they allowed as the religious law what was, in fact, the local custom. With the growth of
602 Western processes, the perception of new economic advantages tended to
776 change the equilibrium of the two principles. The advance of education
779 and heightened consciousness of Islam as a world faith also tended to make the religious leaders themselves much more keenly aware of any divergence.
671 Wealthy men who want to leave property to their sons, men with a strong
182 religious sense, men who regard themselves as progressive, or who are in revolt against their clan leaders, therefore tend to be protagonists of the Muslim law. The conservatives, those who see in the custom a defence for women, those who see in it a symbol of an essentially Malay way of life, argue for the retention of the custom. Contact with the West, they say, is changing the structure of the peasant society enough already. The issue has also entered the modern political scene, since the search for factors to increase Malay integration tends to stress the national and extra-national character of Islam at the expense of the more local qualities of the *adat*. Here too it is growing Westernization which has sharpened the issue.

184 In a general discussion such as this, one may be allowed to refer to the
565 peasantry of South East Asia as a body. But they are not uniform in ethnic composition, in national interests, in language, in religion, or in general culture. Moreover, within any local community, there are competing, even conflicting, interests and opinions. The peasant may be unable to face up to the general issues which affect his life so deeply, but in so far as he understands his own interests he is very alive to them and capable of exercising keen judgement in them. It is the small scale of his organization for the most part which renders him so vulnerable.

000 What is likely to be the future of South East Asia from the peasant angle? Prediction is not worth much, since so many elements in the situation are imperfectly known, but there are a few which seem to be significant.

565 The peasant has no native middle class, of the same society as himself,
185 to give a lead to his development and stability in any wider economic
656 organizations that may be set up for his benefit. To improve his economic lot, and in particular to give him a larger fraction of his product through control of marketing, co-operative societies have often been proposed and sometimes tried. Their success has been only limited, partly because the peasant has not been fully persuaded of their attractions as against what the alien middleman can offer, and partly because of the difficulty of securing adequate technical supervision and administration at a sufficiently low official level. Much is now apt to be made of the colonial or semi-colonial status of the South East Asian peasant as a drag upon his development. There is no doubt that colonialism, as a specific form of political control of under-developed territories by a metropolitan Power, is